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ABSTRACT

This study compared three ways of analyzing individual mother-infant attachment behaviors in order to test the hypothesis that success in the search for stable individual differences in attachment behavior is in part a function of the level at which behavior individuality is assessed. Fifty infants were videotaped in the Ainsworth and Wittig Strange Situation at 12 and 18 months of age. Three different assessments of individual differences were employed: (1) time samples of discrete behaviors directed toward adults (look, glance, vocalize, etc.); (2) rating of categories of behavior directed toward adults (proximity seeking, contact maintaining, crying, etc.); and (3) a classification scheme based on profiles which combine several of the rated behavior categories. Results indicated that evidence for the stability of individual differences was a function of the level of analysis. The reliability of discrete behavior variables was typically very low, and there was little evidence of temporal stability. There was clear evidence for stable individual differences in the analysis of behavior category data. Classification data based largely on reunion behavior and crying were even more stable across the six month interval. These classifications have a variety of theoretically significant correlates in non-Strange Situation behavior from early infancy into the third year of life. (Author/SB)

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The Stability of Individual Differences in Infant-Mother Attachment

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Abstract

Fifty infants were seen twice in the Ainsworth & Wittig Strange Situation to assess individual differences in the quality of infant-mother attachment at 12 and at 18 months of age. Three different assessments of individual differences were employed: a) time samples of discrete behaviors directed toward adults (look, glance, vocalize, smile, gesture, approach, touch, hold on), b) rating of categories of behavior directed toward adults (proximity seeking, contact maintaining, proximity/interaction avoiding, contact resisting, distance interaction, crying), and c) a classification scheme based on profiles which combine several of the rated behavior categories. Evidence for the stability of individual differences was clearly in function of the level of analysis. The reliability of discrete behavior variables was typically very low, and there was little evidence of temporal stability. There was clear evidence for stable individual differences in the analysis of behavior category data. This was especially true of behavior toward the mother during reunion after brief separations. Classification data based largely on reunion behavior and crying were even more stable across the six month interval. Each infant was assigned to one of three categories (secure/normative, avoidant, or ambivalent) on the basis of the patterning of attachment behavior at 12 months. Forty-eight of the fifty infants were independently reassigned to the same category on the basis of the same behaviors at 18 months. Not only are these classifications highly stable over this time period, they have a variety of theoretically significant correlates in non-Strange Situation behavior from early infancy into the third year of life. In contrast to time sampling of phenotypically similar discrete behaviors, assessments which take into account the behavioral context of behavior yield more reliable and more valid assessments of individual differences in the quality of infant-adult relationships.

The Stability of Individual Differences in Infant-Mother Attachment

Infant-adult ties have often been conceptualized in terms of an underlying causal or dispositional trait. Some infants are said to be strongly attached and others to be less strongly attached, or not at all attached to an adult (e.g. Feldman & Ingham, 1975)[1]. Attachment is often operationalized in terms of a small number of "attachment behaviors". These include behaviors which promote proximity to presumed attachment figures and behaviors which are perhaps directed more often toward attachment figures than toward non-attachment figures. To operationalize attachment in terms of attachment behaviors is to say that approaching, touching, looking, clinging, protesting separation, etc. are valid "indices" or measures of attachment. Strong attachments have often been inferred from (as well as used to explain) performance of attachment behavior at high frequency and/or intensity. Trait models assume that various attachment indices are significantly correlated and that individual differences in these behaviors are stable across time.

The attachment construct has recently fallen under the cloud of a general dissatisfaction with the use of trait constructs and individual differences research strategies in personality and developmental psychology (e.g., Masters & Wellman, 1974). The most influential critiques have been narrowly empirical, that is, they have not asked whether trait constructs are the kinds of constructs we want to build attachment theory around. Instead, recent critiques have dwelt upon the evidence that attachment behaviors are not strongly intercorrelated and are not remarkably stable across time. From this evidence it has been concluded that the concept of attachment is seriously lacking in construct validity. Critics have suggested either that there is little to be gained from individual

differences approaches to infant social development, or that individual differences are fine but that we can do without an attachment construct. It has been claimed that everything implied by the notion of a tie between infant and adult can be captured in terms of the details of interactive behavior. The argument is that we can do without abstractions which take us away from the level of behavioral data (See Waters, Note 1, for a review). The present research was designed to test the hypothesis that success in the search for stable individual differences in attachment behavior is in part a function of the level at which behavioral individuality is assessed.

Method

Subjects

Fifty infants (25 males, 25 females) and their mothers participated in the experiment. They were recruited from a subject pool maintained at the Institute of Child Development. Birth announcements in Minneapolis-St. Paul newspapers initiated written contact with families. Those who returned pre-addressed postage-free cards indicating interest in participating in research were included in the subject pool. Fifty families were contacted by telephone and visited in their homes for explanation of the present research. All but three of the infants studied were first born, all of the families were intact. Socioeconomic status of the families spanned the lower middle to upper middle classes.

Design

Each infant and its mother were seen in the Ainsworth & Wittig (1969) Strange Situation within two weeks of the infant's first birthday and again when the infant was eighteen months old. Four analyses were involved in the experiment: a) 12-18 month correlations among time samples of discrete behaviors and estimates of the reliability of the time sample data, b) 12-18 month correlations among rated behavior categories, c) an analysis of the stability of

patterns of rated behavior categories (using a classification system described in Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (Note 2)), and d) an analysis of the effects of error variance on the stability of these classifications, using artificial data generated from the 12- and 18-month data described above.

Procedure

The Strange Situation is a laboratory procedure developed by Ainsworth & Wittig (1969) to highlight the operation of an attachment behavioral system in the year-old infant. The procedure consists of eight episodes presented in a standard order for all subjects. All subjects were tested in an 11 x 14 foot room at the Institute of Child Development. The room was equipped with two chairs, one for the mother and one for the stranger, and with magazines for the mother and a variety of age appropriate toys for the infant (puzzles, push toys, dolls, etc). A schematic drawing of the room, the placement of the equipment, and the location of observers is presented in Figure 1.

Insert Fig. 1 about here

A brief summary of the procedure is presented in Table 1. The order of episodes is arranged such that the infant experiences a series of increasingly (mildly) stressful situations (new room, unfamiliar adult, separation from mother but in company of an adult, separation and alone).

Insert Table 1 about here

The procedure was designed to be comparable to brief everyday experiences common in our culture. The goal was to facilitate observation of heightened attachment

behavior in such conditions in order to better understand its function and organization, and to highlight individual differences. Ainsworth, Bell & Stayton (1971) have shown a clear relationship between behavior in the Strange Situation and the operation of an attachment-exploration balance in the home. The relationship seems strong enough to justify the use of this procedure to predict such behavior in one-year olds. The Strange Situation was not designed to determine the onset or strength of attachment to an adult (c.f. Feldman & Ingham, 1975); it presupposes that an attachment already exists. The procedure is not well suited to subjects under the age of one year. Without evaluation of its relationship to the attachment-exploration balance in older children, the procedure as analyzed in the present experiment should be used with caution if subjects are two years old or older. A detailed discussion of the use of the Strange Situation is presented by Ainsworth et al. (Note 2).

Response Measures

Each Strange Situation was videotaped and all response measures were scored from these records. Experience showed that recording with a pivot-mounted camera from a single position was sufficient in most cases, and that concurrent dictation of a narrative record was largely redundant with information available from the video-tape alone.

Two types of behavioral measures were scored, time samples (number of 10 sec intervals in which a behavior occurred), and ratings of categories of behavior. Scores were pro-rated proportionally for curtailed episodes.

Time samples of discrete behaviors and crying. The frequency (or duration) with which looking (2 sec or longer), glancing (less than 2 sec), vocalizing, smiling, gesturing, approaching, touching, and holding were directed toward each adult was estimated for 30 randomly selected subjects in terms of time samples.

The number of 10 sec intervals in which the behavior occurred was recorded for each episode. The number of 10 sec intervals in which crying occurred was recorded for each episode for all 50 subjects. The Pearson correlation between individual total scores for two independent raters for Episodes 3, 4, and 8 was greater than .80 for each variable and there were no mean differences between raters.

Ratings of behavior categories. Ainsworth has developed a series of behavioral variables scored from the Strange Situation in the form of 7-point ratings assigned to behavior toward each adult separately in each episode. These measures were developed to take into account the fact that many attachment behaviors serve common goals (e.g., approaching, reaching, and vocalizing can each have the predictable outcome of achieving proximity to an adult). In a sense these variables are composites of the discrete behaviors mentioned above. However, these variables are not simple sums of discrete behaviors. Rather, they attempt to take into account the behavioral and situational context in which a given behavior occurs (e.g., a delayed approach on reunion contributes to a lower score than an immediate approach). Since the significant aspects of timing, intensity, and context are judged by Ainsworth to differ from episode to episode and to differ when behavior is directed toward the mother as opposed to the stranger, and when different combinations of behaviors are involved, a rating format rather than a weighted composite was adopted. The variables scored were:

(a) Proximity seeking (PS) - The intensity and persistence of the baby's efforts to gain (or regain) physical contact (or more weakly, proximity) with an adult.

(b) Contact maintaning (CM) - The degree of activity and persistence in the baby's efforts to maintain physical contact with an adult once he

has gained it (especially such active resistance to being released as clinging or protesting), additionally, behaviors such as sinking in while held which tend to delay the adult's attempts to release the baby (i.e., to prolong contact by not signaling readiness for release).

(c) Proximity and interaction avoiding (PA) - The intensity, persistence, duration, and promptness of any active avoidance of proximity or interaction, even across a distance, especially in reunion episodes. Included here are aborted approaches upon reunion, turning the face away when greeted, prolonged pout and refusal to make eye contact or to interact, and mild signs of wariness of the stranger accompanied by retreat to the mother. This rating does not include behavior which denotes only active interest in toys by an infant who is not distressed by separation or by the presence of a stranger (see Sroufe & Waters, 1977 for a discussion of heart-rate data as a tool in validating the distinction between active avoidance and distraction or preoccupation).

(d) Contact resisting (CR) - The intensity and frequency or duration of negative behavior evoked by a person who comes into contact or proximity with the baby, especially behavior accompanied by signs of anger. Relevant behaviors include: pushing away, dropping or hitting toys offered, body movements in resistance to being held. More diffuse indications include tantrums, and especially a prolonged pout or cranky fussing or other signs of <u>inability to be comforted by contact with the adult</u>. The behavior may alternate with active efforts to achieve or maintain contact and both can be scored high in the same episode.

(e) Distance interaction (DI) - Spontaneous indications of positive interest in an adult, in the absence of proximity. Includes smiling, vocalizing, gestures, and play carried out with some attempts to elicit the adult's interest or interaction.

Each of these behaviors was scored on a 1-7 scale on which every odd point is anchored to one or more specific patterns of response. The anchoring descriptions were selected by Ainsworth from typed transcripts of the actual behavior of one-year olds in the Strange Situation, and in this respect the scales have a clear advantage over typical subjective rating scales. The complete set of scales is included as an appendix in Ainsworth et al., Note 2.

Since the results of this experiment were expected to reflect upon the usefulness of the Strange Situation procedure, efforts were made to insure that the scoring of these variables was in accordance with the practices of Ainsworth and her associates. Dr. Mary B. Main generously scored episodes 5 and 8 from a number of our videotapes. The correlations between her independent scoring of 15 randomly selected subjects and ours were high enough to indicate substantial agreement in all but one case (r = .97, .87, .77, .84, and .61 for AS, CM, CR, PA, and DI, respectively). While the correlation for DI was significant beyond the .01 level, the absolute value is relatively low and results for this variable should be viewed accordingly. Pearson correlations among independent rescoring of Episodes 5, 7, and 8 for 25 randomly selected video records were greater than .80 for each variable and there were no significant mean differences between raters.

Classification

In addition to the time sampling, and behavior ratings mentioned above, each infant's behavior in the Strange Situation was summarized by assigning the

infant a category designation on the basis of patterns of the rated interactive behavior categories and the crying data. The classification scheme used was developed by Ainsworth and her colleagues and has been used widely to assess the quality of infant-mother relationships (see Ainsworth et al., Note 2 for a review). The 3 major categories and their relationships to interactive behavior and crying are summarized in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Group B is the modal classification for middle class one-year-olds; in past research approximately 65% of a sample were typically placed in this group. Subgroup B_3 is the largest subgroup (typically 40% of total sample) and is the group showing the most effective use of the mother as a secure base from which to explore, both at home and in the Strange Situation. Groups A and C are typically smaller (approximately 20% and 15% of total sample, respectively) and together are the groups often termed "anxiously attached".

Because the subgroups of each classification are small and have not been well studied, the emphasis in the present experiment was upon the larger groups A, B, and C. Nonetheless, all infants were assigned to subgroups, in part because attention to subgroup differences greatly facilitates agreement as to classification assignments. Each infant was classified at 12 and 18 months by independent judges. Classifications were not based on recorded scores alone, but on the video record as a whole. Ninety percent of the subjects were classified by 2 or more judges at both ages. Interjudge agreement as to classification into the A, B, and C groups was 91%, 94%, and 85%, respectively; overall subgroup

agreement was 84%. Disagreements were conferenced and resolved by reference to group and subgroup means provided by Ainsworth et al., (Note 2).

Since the results of the present experiment were expected to reflect upon the usefulness of Ainsworth's Strange Situation classification system, efforts were made to insure that classifications were made in accordance with the practices of Ainsworth and her colleagues. Data on rated interactive behavior and crying from all episodes from a sample of 105 subjects provided by Dr. Ainsworth were employed in a multiple discriminant function analysis of the A, B, C groups. The resulting discriminant functions were used to develop classification equations which were applied to our 12- and 18-month data to obtain empirical classifications as similar as possible to those that a criterial judge would have assigned to our subjects. Despite the fact that the sample provided by Ainsworth was relatively small for this analysis, empirical classifications agreed with our own classifications approximately as well as the classification functions have been shown to cross-validate on a subsample of the Ainsworth data (68% A, 90% B, 35% C). Empirical classifications which differed from ours were consistently in the direction of classifying our A and C infants in group B. This also occurs on cross-validation of Ainsworth's data on a subgroup from the same sample and is to be expected as a result of the small size of the A and C groups available for developing classification functions. These results, along with the distribution of subjects assigned to each group at 12-months (20% A, 60% B, 20% C), and the fact that group means on interactive behaviors and crying did not diverge greatly from means reported by Ainsworth et al. (Note 2), provide support for the conclusion that our classifications largely corresponded to the criteria developed by Ainsworth and her colleagues.

Results

The results of the analyses of discrete behaviors, interactive behavior categories, classification, and the analysis of the effects of error variance on classification are presented separately below, in four sections.[2] In order to increase the reliability of individual scores, the data for each variable were summed across episodes as follows: Preseparation behavior toward mother (Episodes 1 + 2 + 3), reunion behavior toward mother (Episodes 5 + 8), preseparation behavior toward stranger (Episode 3), behavior toward stranger during separation (Episodes 4 + 7). Crying data were combined into three composite scores, preseparation (Episodes 2 + 3), separation (Episodes 4 + 6 + 7), and reunion (Episodes 5 + 8).

Time samples of discrete behaviors

The 12-18 month correlations between each discrete behavior as it was directed to the mother or stranger in preseparation, separation, and reunion episodes are presented in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Even if we allow that the scheduled changes in the stranger's behavior as well as her initial unfamiliarity in the preseparation episode (See Table 1) might reasonably reduce temporal stability for that episode, only 4 of the remaining 21 correlations reach conventional significance levels. These results are consistent with the data reviewed by Masters & Wellman (1974), in which there were consistently very few signs of stability of discrete behaviors, regardless of whether the intervening interval was three minutes, one day, four months, or longer.

While these results appear to be valid negative evidence against the hypothesis that attachment behavior is stable across time, this can only be so if the possibility of inadequate assessment can be ruled out. One approach to this issue is afforded by the conventional psychometric theory of test reliability (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally, 1967; Wiggins, 1973). If we consider each 10 sec sampling interval to be a test item which is passed or failed (the target behavior occurs or does not occur), and consider each 3 (6,7) min episode a test consisting of 18 (36,42) such items, we can compute an index of the dependability of individual scores (Cronbach's alpha) from item statistics.[3] Since an assumption of time sampling methods is that the target behavior is equally likely to occur in any sampling interval, we can make use of the simplifying assumption that each of our "items" is of equal difficulty (equally likely to be passed).

The alpha reliabilities of each discrete behavior score for behavior toward mother and stranger are presented in Table 4. Since the reliabilities of the present time samples of discrete behaviors could be increased by increasing the number of 10 sec intervals of observation (i.e., by increasing test length), Spearman-Brown estimates of the duration of time sampling necessary to achieve conventional psychometric standards of reliability are also presented for each behavior at both ages in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

The results indicate that the reliability of typical Strange Situation assessments of individual scores (as opposed to group means) for discrete behaviors is frequently too low to support an adequate test of the temporal stability of these behaviors (or to evaluate correlations with other behaviors),

especially when data from individual 3 min episodes are used.

Interactive behavior and crying

The 12-18 month correlations between each rated interactive behavior category for the entire sample are presented in Table 5. Since crying is also a category of behavior rather than a discrete behavioral act, 12-18 month correlations for crying during preseparation, separation, and reunion episodes are also presented in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

If we allow that the scheduled changes in the stranger's behavior as well as her initial unfamiliarity in the preseparation episode (see Table 1) might reasonably reduce temporal stability in that episode, 13 of the remaining 18 correlations reach conventional significance levels. These results clearly contrast with the results for discrete behaviors, reported above. Evidence for temporal stability is especially clear among behaviors directed toward the mother in the reunion episodes and for crying, the behaviors that are most important in the classifications discussed below, as indicated in Table 2.

Classification

The 12- and 18-month classification data for each subject are presented in Table 6. Overall, 48 subjects were classified in the same A, B, C group at 12- and 18-months; 30 subjects were classified in the same subgroup at 12- and 18-months.

Insert Table 6 about here

Cohen's (1960) index of nominal scale agreement (kappa) was computed and tested as described by Fliess, Cohen, & Everitt (1969), for both group and subgroup classifications. It is computed by correcting the observed rate of agreement (same classification at both ages) for the rate of agreement expected by chance alone.[4] Kappa's for both A, B, C classification (κ = .92) and for subgroup (κ = .53) are significant beyond the .001 level ($z = 8.81$, $p < 10^{-10}$ and $z = 9.34$, $p < 10^{-10}$, respectively). While ratings of interactive behavior categories and crying scores were substantially more stable from 12- to 18-months than time samples of discrete behaviors, classifications based on profiles or patterns of interactive behavior and crying were even more stable.

Effects of random error on classification

While the interactive behaviors and crying data upon which classifications were based proved to be significantly correlated across the 12-18 month interval, even an average correlation of .50 implies substantial variation in individual scores and profiles. Since the A, B, C classifications showed substantially more temporal stability than the individual scores upon which they were based, there may be patterns of consistency within the residual 12-18 month variance of the individual variables that are not reflected in Table 5. One approach to this question would be to compare reliability estimates similar to those presented in Table 4 with the 12-18 month correlations in Table 5. If the reliabilities were not substantially above the observed temporal stability estimates, then the best explanation of the unexplained 12-18 month variance would be that it is largely random error.[5] Unfortunately internal consistency reliability estimates cannot be computed for the type of rating scales used in the present experiment, and Ainsworth et al. (Note 2) have demonstrated that independent short term test-retest assessments are not feasible because of carry-over from initial

testing. Pairwise correlations among behavior categories also see poorly suited to the problem of evaluating residual variance, especially if patterns of behavior rather than total scores are of interest.

The following auxiliary analysis employed the A, B, C classification system to help determine whether the unexplained variance in rated interactive behavior categories and crying scores is best interpreted as random (error) variance. Three sets of interactive behavior and crying data were involved in the analysis, a) data on 155 12-month-old subjects (105 provided by Ainsworth plus the data from the 12-month testing on the present sample, b) data from the 50 subjects tested at 18-months in the present experiment, and c) a set of artificial data generated from the 12-month data of the present experiment. The artificial data were generated independently for each variable starting with the actual 12-month data of 50 subjects. Error variance was added to individual scores such that the correlation between the actual data and the artificial data was equal to the 12-18 month correlation for each variable. The resulting data simulated the effects of error variance on 12-month Strange Situation data in that changes in one subject's score on one variable was uncorrelated with changes on other variables, and in that variable means were not changed and intercorrelations among variables were attenuated.

The data from 155 12-month-old subjects were employed in a multiple discriminant function analysis of the A, B, C groups. The resulting discriminant functions were used to develop classification equations which were used to classify the subjects in this development group and were also applied to the data from the 50 18-month-old subjects of the present experiment, and to ten independent sets of artificial data generated as described above. The classification results for the 18-month-old sample and for the artificial data

are presented in Table 7.

Insert Table 7 about here

Both the 18-month data and the artificial data yielded significant cross-validation results, kappa = .596 ($z = 5.32$, $p < 10^{-6}$) and .275 ($z = 2.84$, $p < 10^{-2}$), respectively. Cross-validation success was greater for the 18-month data than for the artificial data, suggesting that the classification functions for the A, B, C groups are sensitive to non-random variance over and above the variance accounted for by the 12-18 month correlations between the variables. A chi-square analysis of goodness of fit indicated that the pattern of cross-validation results from the 18 month data differed significantly from the pattern predicted from the analysis of artificial (error) data (χ^2 (6) = 18.73, $p < .001$). Misclassified subjects from Group A were assigned to Group B in the actual data; they were equally likely to be assigned to Group B or Group C in the error data. Misclassified subjects from Group B were most often assigned to Group A in actual data; they were most often assigned to Group C in the error data. Misclassified subjects in Group C were most often assigned to Group B in the actual data; they were equally likely to be assigned to Group A or Group B in the error data. We can confidently reject the hypothesis that unexplained (residual) variance in the 12-18 month correlations in Table 5 is unreliable or error variance. In an univariate correlational analysis of temporal stability, this unexplained variance would typically be designated behavioral or measurement "noise". It is apparent however, that at least part of this variance makes a substantial contribution to the stability of individual differences in patterns of interactive behavior and crying from 12- to 18-months.

Discussion

The analysis of discrete behaviors from Strange Situation data, or from data collected in similar settings is characteristic of attachment research undertaken from a trait construct perspective (e.g. Coates, Anderson & Hartup, 1972a, b; Feldman & Ingham, 1975; Maccoby & Feldman, 1972). Masters & Wellman (1974) have recently reviewed the correlational evidence for stability and intercorrelation among discrete "attachment behaviors", and have concluded that there is little support for the notion of attachment as a trait construct. The present analysis of discrete behavior scores from the Strange Situation behavior of a large sample of subjects is consistent with the results reviewed by Masters & Wellman (1974). There is very little evidence for temporal stability of discrete behaviors, as they have typically been assessed and employed in operational definitions of infant-adult attachment. An analysis of the reliability of individual scores based on time samples of Strange Situation behavior, however, indicates that neither temporal stability nor significant correlations among discrete attachment behaviors or between these behaviors and external criteria could be expected.

In discussing their study of the stability of attachment behaviors from 10-14, and 14-18 months, Coates et al. (1972b) wondered whether the evidence would not have been stronger had they collected longer samples of each subjects' behavior. Indeed, the frequency with which touching, looking, vocalizing, gesturing, approaching, etc. occur in the Strange Situation is quite low (often less than 1.5 per minute). The most elementary fact of time sampling methodology is that samples of a criterion behavior must accurately estimate the parameters of the population from which they are taken (in the case one subject's behavior) in order to be useful. In all behavior sampling techniques, the adequacy of a

behavior sample is determined by the interplay of the duration of each sampling interval, the number of times, and the rate at which intervals are sampled, and by the duration of each occurance of the behavior, its rate of ocurrance, and its temporal patterning (see Altmann, 1974). Where the behavior in question is as rare as each of the discrete attachment behaviors sampled in the present study, a large number of observation intervals is necessary to obtain reliable estimates of individual scores. Samples of 2, 3, or 5 instances of a behavior easily show fluctuations of 20-200% on the basis of differences in behavior that should be trivial for the hypothesis in question. Is a child who looks at mother once today and twice tomorrow twice as "strongly attached" in only a day's time?

The present data suggest that the Strange Situation is not the best setting in which to test the hypothesis that discrete behaviors are stable over time and that as "indices" of attachment they are significantly intercorrelated. At present, this hypothesis remains neither proven, disproven, nor even fairly tested.

What is the likelihood that samples of discrete behaviors based on hours of observation (perhaps even in a variety of settings) would yield valid indices of individual differences in attachment? The chances seem small indeed, for the following reason. When discrete behaviors are used to operationally define attachment, all instances of looking, or vocalizing, or approaching are summed, on the assumption that all instances of phenotypically similar behaviors are equivalent. This assumption is consistent with the atheoretical orientation from which operational definitions often proceed. Unfortunately, this assumption (as a generalization) is manifestly untrue, as many ethological studies of the organization of behavior have demonstrated. Baerends' (1975) study of the functional organization of nesting behavior in herring gulls provides an

excellent example of the implications of the complex causation of phenotypically similar behavior patterns. The correlation between nest building behavior and preening was found to be negative, when many samples of short time spans were considered; the correlation was not significant when longer time spans were analyzed; the correlation became positive when total scores for long observation periods were analyzed. This is understandable when we consider that preening serves a variety of maintenance functions for the bird (which vary with time and conditions) and that it is also a response to conflict between tendencies to remain at the nest to incubate and tendencies to leave the nest to gather nesting material. While the bird is building there is no need for displacement preening, as there is no tendency to leave the nest. Over intermediate periods of time the need to maintain feathers occurs and diminishes the negative correlation. Over long observation periods, the higher the rate of nest building the more often the incubation/nest leaving conflict arises and thus total scores for building and preening are positively correlated. The point is that all instances of preening behaviors are not functionally equivalent. Body care and conflict can only be distinguished when the context in which preening is sampled is taken into account. Waters & Vaughn (Note 3) have provided a similar example from study of the organization of visual regard in several classes of preschool peers. It was found that the correlation between a child's attention structure rank and the rank of the children from whom visual attention was received was positive for looks received during interaction and from very close distances, and negative for looks received from ≥ 3 but < 9 feet. There was no correlation between a child's rank and the rank of children looking from distances greater than 9 feet. Once again all instances of a phenotypically similar discrete behavior are not equivalent. It is often necessary to take the temporal, situational, and

behavioral context of behavior into account, in order to distinguish the multiple functions of a given behavior and to derive valid indices of behavior constructs.

Whenever a variety of essentially unselected variables (or behaviors) are summed to produce a total score, the aggregate will have little meaning and only a limited range of reliable individual differences. When the variables in question are phenotypically similar behaviors, the measure may look like a useful index of looking, or distance interaction, or attachment, but to the extent that a variety of influences are operating at once, the most likely common factors to emerge in total scores will be the ubiguitous dimensions of temperament, which seem to influence all behaviors a little."

Rather than assessing attachment, reliable assessments of looking, vocalizing, approaching, etc. seem more likely to assess individual differences in activity level, emotionality, or sociability. While the data are not yet in, the prospects for the study of attachment as a trait construct do not presently seem encouraging (Sroufe & Waters, Note 4; Waters, Note 2).

The major alternative to social learning/trait models of attachment is the behavioral systems approach developed by Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1972, 1973) and elaborated by Beschof (1975). The ratings of categories of interactive behavior used in the present study were developed by Ainsworth with specific reference to this theory of the organization of attachment behavior. They explicitly take into account a variety of contextual variables, and in contrast to typical assessments of discrete "attachment behaviors", include assessments of behavior patterns antithetical to the effective functioning of the attachment behavioral system.

The results of the analysis of these categories of interactive behavior and of crying point to significant signs of stability from 12-18 months, especially

with regard to behavior toward the mother during reunion episodes. These results offer a clear contrast to the results from the analysis of discrete behaviors. They also contradict the widely held view that behavior is inherently unpredictable and unstable because it is so complexly determined and so sensitive to contextual influences. On the contrary, it seems that the stability of behavior will only become apparent when we fully understand its complex determinants and its sensitivity to context.

The impressive stability of profiles or patterns of interactive behavior (Table 6) suggests that conventional univariate approaches to continuity in development are not optimal strategies. Indeed the analysis of the artifical data presented in Table 7 suggests that these approaches may be both inefficient and insensitive to important sources of stability in the organization of behavior.

To a certain extent, the Strange Situation has become the attachment situation. As indicated above, it was designed with a specific purpose in mind and may not be well suited for the study of a variety of interesting and important questions. While the present results are encouraging as to certain important characteristics of interactive behavior assessment scales and classification procedures that can be used in the analysis of Strange Situation data, they are not properly validity data. Despite recent attempts to "validate" the Strange Situation by internal evidence alone (differential response to mother vs father vs stranger, etc.), the validity of any procedure as an assessment of an attachment construct depends ultimately upon evidence that the assessment has theoretically relevant patterns of external correlates. Ainsworth et al. (Note 1) have recently reviewed a wide range of studies establishing the external correlates of interactive behavior categories and A, B, C classifications in the

behavior of both mother and infant at home throughout the first year of life, and in a variety of laboratory settings from age one year well into the third year of life. These correlates do not follow directly from the evidence for stable individual differences provided in the present study. On the contrary, they are the first steps toward understanding how such stability could possibly have occurred.

Reference Notes

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Footnotes

1 The term "securely attached" is often used interchangeably with the term "strongly attached , to refer to a quantitative dimension of individual differences. This is unfortunate because the term "securely attached" is also used to describe individual differences in the quality of the attachment relationship, especially by researchers who explicitly reject the notion of quantitative individual differences.

2 Since normative data on Strange Situation behavior have been reported extensively, they are not repeated for this sample. The only significant age effects or trends indicate that 18-month-olds are more mobile, more vocal, and perhaps slightly less distressed in the Strange Situation than they were as 12-month olds. The only significant sex effects indicated that crying (and its correlates) was greater in males than in females in the second separation and reunion sequence (Episodes 7 & 8) at both ages. Descriptive statistics for the present sample are available from the author on request.

3 A familiar approach to the measurement of test reliability is the method of intercorrelating split-halves of the test, using sums of odd and even numbered items. Split-half correlations are essentially instantaneous test-retest reliabilities, when they are adjusted upward (using the Spearman-Brown formula) to account for the fact that each of the correlated tests is only half as long as the total test. Of course a

test can be divided into halves in a number of different ways. Cronbach's alpha is equal to the mean of all possible corrected split-half correlations. It is also equal to the familiar Kuder-Richardson reliability estimate, (KR-21 in the case of items of equal difficulty).

4 Given the observed marginal frequencies for groups A, B, and C at 12 and 18-months (20%, 60%, 20%, and 18%, 64%, 18%, respectively), the rate of 12-18 month consistency expected by chance alone is 46%. The observed rate of agreement was 96%. Kappa equals O-E/1-E.

5 It would not be highly desirable for the A, B, C classification to be insensitive to large amounts of random variation in individual scores, a) because this would suggest that the categories are perhaps so broad that the evidence for stability is unimportant, and b) because this would be more consistent with the hypothesis that the classifications tap underlying individual differences in temperamental variables, than with the hypothesis that they are useful in describing individual differences in the organization of attachment behavior.

Figure 1

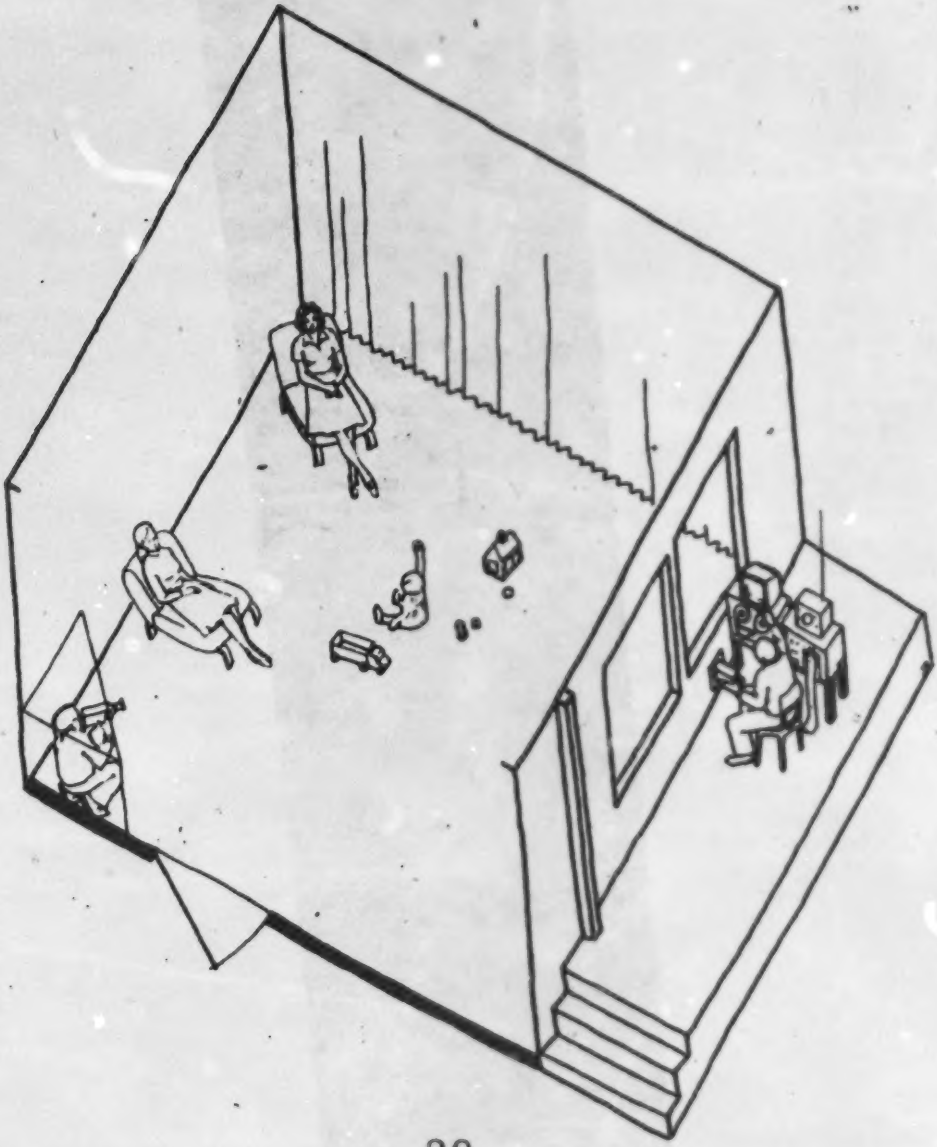

Table 1

Summary of Strange-Situation Procedure

Episode	Persons Present [a]	Time	Events and Procedures
1	M, B	Variable (approx. 1 min)	M & B are introduced into S/S room by E. If necessary, M interests B in toys before being seated. M does not initiate interaction but is responsive to bids from B.
2	M, B	3 min	M remains seated and is responsive to bids for interaction but does not initiate.
3	M, B, S	3 min	S enters and is seated; sits silently for 1 min; talks to M for 1 min; engages B in interaction and/or toy play for 1 min.
4	B, S	3 min (less if B extremely distressed)	M leaves room, S allows B to play alone but remains responsive to interactive bids. If B is crying, S offers contact and tries to comfort. If B refuses or resists, S does not persist. Terminate episode after 1 min hard crying or on M's request.

Table 1 (continued)

Episode	Persons Present	Time	Events and Procedures
5	M, B	3 min	M calls B from outside door and steps inside, pausing at doorway to greet B and to reach and offer contact. If necessary, B is held and comforted then reinterested in toys; otherwise, M is seated and remains responsive to bids from B but does not initiate.
6	B	3 min (less if B extremely distressed)	M leaves room; B remains alone. Terminate episode if one min hard crying ensues or on M's request.
7	B, S	3 min (less if B extremely distressed)	S returns and is seated. If B is crying or begins to cry without pause, S offers contact and tries to comfort. If B cannot be comforted and crying continues (or on M's request) terminate episode.

Table 1 (continued)

Episode	Persons Present	Time	Events and Procedures
8	M, B	3 min	M calls B from outside door and steps inside, pausing at doorway to greet B and to reach and offer contact. If necessary, B is held and comforted and then reinterested in toys; otherwise M is seated and remains responsive to bids from B but does not initiate if B is content in toy play.

[a] M = mother; B = baby; S = Stranger

Table 2

Summary of Strange Situation Classification

Classification	Descriptor	Classification Criteria (from reunion episodes 5 & 8)[a]				
		Proximity seeking	Contact maintaining	Proximity avoiding	Contact resisting	Crying
A (2 subgroups)	"Avoidant"	Low	Low	High	Low	Low (preseparation); High or low (separation); Low (reunion).
B (4 subgroups)	"Secure"	High	High (if distressed)	Low	Low	Low (preseparation); High or low (separation); Low (reunion).
C (2 subgroups)	"Ambivalent"	High	High (often preseparation)	Low	High	Occasionally (preseparation); High (separation); Moderate to high (reunion).

[a] Typical of the group as a whole; subgroups differ in non-reunion episodes and to some extent in reunion behavior. See Ainsworth et al. (Note 2) for detailed classification instructions.

Table 3

Stability of Discrete "Attachment Behaviors"

	Mother		Stranger	
	Preseparation (7 minutes)[a]	Reunion (6 minutes)	Reseparation (3 minutes)	Separation (6 minutes)
Look or Glance	.070	.220	-.050	.110
Vocalize	.360*	-.071	.121	.240
Smile	.462**	-.160	.200	.682**
Gesture	.120	-.110	-.087	-.100
Approach	-.153	.040	.113	.090
Touch	.444**	.110	---	.260
Hold On	---[b]	.260	---	-.080

Note: N = 30

[a] Duration of combined episodes

[b] Dashes indicate that a behavior did not occur at one age.

* =p <.05 (one tailed test)

** =p <.01 (one tailed test)

Reliability of Time Sampled Discrete Behavior Data

Variable	Reliability of time sampled behavior (Cronbach's α)		Spearman-Brown estimate of time sample (minutes) necessary to achieve α = .90	
	12 months	18 months	12 months	18 months
Behavior Toward Mother				
Preseparation Episodes 2 & 3 (7 minutes)				
Look and Glance	.51(.28)[b]	.51(.28)	60.8	60.3
Vocalize	.45(.24)	.66(.39)	77.3	33.2
Smile	.53(.29)	—	56.1	—
Gesture	.03(.01)	.49(.27)	1905.8	65.1
Approach	.35(.13)	.51(.28)	116.0	59.8
Touch	.47(.25)	.25(.12)	71.0	184.1
Hold On	—[a]	.71(.44)	—	25.4
Reunion Episodes 5 & 8 (6 minutes)				
Look and Glance	.62(.45)	.79(.65)	32.7	14.5
Vocalize	.60(.43)	.71(.55)	36.3	21.7
Smile	—	.26(.15)	—	157.7
Gesture	.02(.01)	.37(.23)	2802.6	92.8
Approach	.78(.64)	.43(.27)	14.9	70.7
Touch	.48(.32)	.36(.22)	58.5	97.7
Hold On	.95(.91)	.86(.75)	2.7	8.9

cont'd....

Table 4 (cont'd.

Variable	Reliability of time sampled behavior (Cronbach's α)		Spearman-Brown estimate of time sample minutes necessary to achieve α = .90	
	12 months	18 months	12 months	18 months
Behavior Toward Stranger				
Preseparation Episode 3 (3 minutes)				
Look and Glance	.81	.21	6.2	102.8
Vocalize	.57	.66	14.0	14.0
Smile	---	---	---	---
Gesture	.53	---	24.1	---
Approach	.51	.69	25.6	12.4
Touch	---	---	---	---
Hold On	---	---	---	---
Separation Episodes 4 & 7 (6 minutes)				
Look and Glance	.85(.74)	.69(.53)	9.9	24.2
Vocalize	.66(.49)	.71(.55)	27.9	21.9
Smile	.60(.43)	.44(.28)	36.5	68.8
Gesture	---	.73(.58)	---	20.3
Approach	.26(.15)	.53(.36)	151.3	47.2
Touch	.70(.54)	.72(.56)	23.3	20.7
Hold On	.95(.91)	.96(.92)	2.6	2.1

[a]Dashes indicate reliability is 0.0 or that a behavior did not occur at one age.

[b]Spearman-Brown estimates of the reliability of scores based on 3 min episodes are given in parentheses.

Table 5

Stability of Interactive Behavior Categories and Crying

	Mother		Stranger	
	Preseparation (4 minutes)	Reunion (6 minutes)	Preseparation (3 minutes)	Separation (6 minutes)
Proximity Seeking	.423**	.303*	.033	.286*
Contact Maintaining	.720**	.300*	-.020	.320*
Proximity Avoiding	---[a]	.621**	.207	.229
Contact Resisting	---	.508**	-.056	.274
Distance Interaction	.065	.308*	.180	.319*

	Preseparation (7 minutes)	Separation (9 minutes)	Reunion (6 minutes)
Crying	.765**	.411**	.425**

Note: N = 50

* = p <.05 (one tailed test)
** = p <.01 (one tailed test)

[a]Dashes indicate that the behavior did not occur at one age.

Table

Classifications Based on Patterns of Interactive Behavior & Crying

Twelve Month Classification	Eighteen Month Classification							
	A_1	A_2	B_1	B_2	B_3	B_4	C_1	C_2
A_1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
A_2	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
B_1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
B_2	0	0	2	6	1	0	0	0
B_3	0	0	2	1	8	0	0	0
B_4	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0
C_1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
C_2	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	1

Table 7

Consistency vs Error in 12-18 Month
Stability Data: Cross-Validation
(Data as Decimal Fractions)

Actual Classification (12 months)	Predicted 18 Month Classification[a]			Predicted 18 Month Classification from Error Data[b]		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
A	.67	.33	.00	.52	.21	.27
B	.10	.87	.03	.16	.54	.30
C	.09	.27	.64	.24	.21	.55

[a] N = 50

[b] N = 500